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In feudal Japan's old Edo, the past lingered in shadows and secret corners. Miyuki Miyabe's Apparitions brings this forgotten era to life through nine haunting stories that blur the lines between the living and the dead. With a keen journalist's eye and a fantasy writer's heart, Miyabe crafts tales that explore not just the spirits of old Japan but also the human soul in all its complexities. Miyabe, one of Japan's most beloved authors, is known for her suspenseful novels, but Apparitions marks a departure into historical fiction, set against the backdrop of Tokyo's rich history. This collection will challenge readers who are not familiar with Japanese culture and history, as Miyabe weaves together intricate narratives that rely heavily on cultural references. The stories in Apparitions unfold like a dream, sometimes leaving readers to decipher their meaning or simply enjoy the atmosphere they evoke. Through her works, including the acclaimed Brave Story and The Gate of Sorrows, Miyabe has established herself as a masterful storyteller capable of transporting readers across time and space. Apparitions is a testament to this ability, inviting readers into the mystical world of old Edo where ghosts from Japan's past roam alongside living souls in their daily lives. # Published initially in Japan in 2000, Apparitions reached an English-speaking audience in 2013 through Haikasoru. It is a collection that requires patience and background knowledge for its full richness to be appreciated. Miyabe's love for Tokyo shines through, though her focus on cultural specifics may leave some readers puzzled. # - **Title:** Apparitions: Ghosts of Old Edo - **Author:** Miyuki Miyabe - **Translator:** Daniel Huddleston - **Publication Year (Japan):** 2000; (United States): 2013 - **Publisher:** Haikasoru - **Pages:** 265 In the fourth year of Bunka, a young boy named Ginji was sent to work at a cotton wholesaler called Daikoku'ya in Tōri Setomono-chō. He was placed there by an older man from the Mannen'ya employment agency, which is located in Ōdenma-chō Block 1. This agency typically sends apprentices to wholesale businesses along the way from Ōdenma-chō and surrounding areas, including Muromachi, Takara-chō, Suruga-chō, and Nihonbashitōri-chō. Miyabe's use of specific names such as emperor reigns, businesses, and neighborhoods serves as a shorthand to create a sense of time and place. However, this approach may be unfamiliar or unexplained to those not well-versed in Edo-period historical fiction. As a result, the stories can seem dry to non-experts. The premise of "A Drowsing Dream of Shinjū" centers around Ginji, a 14-year-old employed by Tōichirō, the son of Daikoku'ya, to run errands and carry messages to his girlfriends. Meanwhile, Tōichirō seeks to start selling tea towels with monogatari moyō designs, inspired by literary romances like The Tale of Genji. His father disapproves, citing associations with real-world cases of shinjū. Tōichirō's plans lead him to marry O-Haru and move her to Ōshima-mura, on the other side of the Ōkawa River. When Ginji visits O-Haru's villa, he finds it empty and falls asleep in the foyer, dreaming of Tōichirō and O-Haru's lifeless bodies bound by a monogatari moyō tea towel. This story resonates with familiar Japanese drama themes involving ghostly apparitions of star-crossed lovers. However, Miyabe's confidence in her reader's familiarity with these traditions allows her to avoid deepening the eerie atmosphere through elaborate explanations. Apparitions: A Haunting Collection of Japanese Ghost Stories Miyube's allusions in his book, Apparitions: Ghosts of Old Edo, may elude unfamiliar readers. However, a closer look reveals that the book is more than just individual ghost stories. Rather, it is a cumulative narrative about the city of Edo itself. Although some stories stand on their own, those who can navigate an initial sense of disorientation will find the geography and characters of the city gradually take shape. The strongest pieces require no contextualization, such as "The Oni in the Autumn Rain," where an older woman offers sound advice that transcends time and place. "Cage of Shadows" is another accessible story that showcases Miyabe's mastery of psychologically astute characterization and linear plot progression. This story serves as an excellent starting point for discussing Edo period fiction, evoking themes and tone reminiscent of popular stories from the eighteenth century. For a patient reader willing to invest time, Apparitions builds a gradual atmosphere of strangeness at the margins of human activity. While some readers may become lost in foreign words and names, fans of Japanese ghost stories will find this collection delightful, historically grounded horror fiction with lovely Gothic undertones. Viz Media LLC published the collection "Haikasoru" in 2013, ISBN: 1421567423 / 978-1421567426. The ebook edition has a different ISBN: 1421571838 / 9781421571836 and an ASIN: B00GRA4YS6. The book contains essays by Higashi Masao.